

**Part B State Annual Performance Report (APR) for 2007****Overview of the Annual Performance Report (APR) Development:**

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) first compiled and analyzed data for the development of the Annual Performance Report (APR)/State Performance Plan (SPP) utilizing the expertise of internal personnel. A draft along with the data was reviewed with the Rhode Island Special Education Advisory Committee (RISEAC). RISEAC advises the Commissioner and Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education on matters concerning: (a) the unmet educational needs of children with disabilities; (b) comments publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities; (c) advises the Rhode Island Department of Education in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary under section 618 of the IDEA; (d) advises the RIDE in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in Federal Monitoring Reports under Part B of the IDEA; and (e) advises the RIDE in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities. Membership of the committee is composed of individuals involved in or concerned with the education of children with disabilities. Parents of children with disabilities birth through 26 maintain the majority of the Committee Membership. The Membership also includes individuals with disabilities, teachers, representatives of institutions of higher education, private schools, charter schools, state and local education officials, administrators of programs for children with disabilities foster care and homelessness, vocational, community or business organizations, juvenile and adult corrections and State Child Serving Agencies. The SEAC reviewed the draft and provided suggestions and input. These were incorporated into the final copy of this document.

**Overview of the Annual Performance Report Development for Indicator 1:**Graduating with a Regular High School Diploma in Rhode Island

The awarding of high school diplomas in Rhode Island is a Local Education Agency (LEA) decision based on the authority granted by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. In the 2007-08 school year, the Rhode Island High School Diploma System (described below) will reach full implementation. Special education students meet the same proficiency requirements under the Rhode Island Diploma System as all students. Rhode Island does not offer a differentiated diploma system.

Rhode Island High School Reform

The Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approved high school regulations in January, 2003, and revised the regulations in September, 2008. The regulations address the areas of literacy, personalization and graduation by proficiency. The regulations intend to improve the performance of high schools, increase graduation rates, improve post graduation outcomes and supports to students. A significant effect of the regulations has been the development of the Rhode Island Diploma System.

The Rhode Island Diploma System

Beginning with the Class of 2008, students will be required to demonstrate academic proficiency based on the Rhode Island Grade Level/Grade Span Expectations (GSE/GLEs), apply knowledge and skills in real world settings, and successfully complete a variety of challenging assessments in order to earn a high school diploma. In September 2008, the RI Board of Regents approved revised high school regulations which extend the 2003 regulations and added provisions for middle schools. Below are the 2003 requirements with the 2008 revisions noted:

- Completion of a minimum of 20 Carnegie units.

- Base up to 10% (revised to 33 1/3% by 2012) of the graduation decision on student performance on the State Assessment.
- Completion of a performance based requirement such as end of course exam, senior project, digital portfolio, Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) or similar requirement that demonstrates proficiency on the Rhode Island Grade Level/Grade Span Expectations (GSE/GLEs) and applied learning standards.

Local Education Agencies were awarded a designation of “approval withheld” (showing little or no evidence of implementation of the regulations) or “preliminary approval” (showing signs of implementation of the high school regulations) based on the Commissioners Review in January 2008. Each high school will receive guidance from RIDE in January 2009 on the next review process which will position schools to receive “full approval” by 2010. The RI Board of Regents has established a 2012 deadline for all school to reach “full approval” status or the Regents may deny the LEA the authority to award high school diplomas.

Implementation of this review process, and the pressure to comply by 2012, is leading all high schools to aggressively implement the requirements of the high school regulations. The following areas are the focus of the Commissioners review process:

- Access/Opportunity – Evidence that ensures all students have a legitimate and fair opportunity to meet the RI Grade Level/Grade Span Expectations. All students have genuine access to rigorous programs that support their individual learning plans. Students have access to multiple pathways through high school to achieve the GSE/GLE’s.
- Alignment – Evidence that the LEA has aligned curriculum with the RI GLE/GSE’s and national content standards. The LEA has established evidence of expectations for student learning, employs applied learning across content areas and utilizes a variety of assessments.
- Sufficiency – Evidence that the LEA has established a method for specifying the numbers and types of assessment evidence for determining student proficiency.
- Fairness – Evidence that the LEA has provided valid opportunities for all students, including any sub groups of students, to demonstrate what they know. The LEA has implemented universally designed methods and instruments and has reviewed assessments for bias. Assessment results are communicated to students and families in a clear and timely manner and there is an open appeals process.
- Standard-Setting – Evidence that the LEA has a convincing rationale for the process of determining overall proficiency for graduation which is clearly tied to performance standards. In addition, the standard-setting process involves the community.

#### Rhode Island NCLB Nonacademic Accountability Indicators

There are two types of nonacademic accountability indicators included in the Rhode Island Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) performance standards under NCLB. The first is *participation rate*; schools and districts must test at least 95% of their enrolled students in ELA and mathematics. The second nonacademic indicator measures *attendance* at the elementary and middle school levels and *graduation rate* at the high school level. RIDE stipulates that every school must have a 95% high school graduation rate by the year 2014.

The Rhode Island NCLB graduation requirement will clearly hold implications for students in special education. If high schools do not meet the required graduation rates, progressive levels of intervention will be ordered.

Implications for the Special Education Graduation Rate

The implications of the Rhode Island Diploma System present a major opportunity for ensuring all students achieve high expectations. By providing students multiple methods to meeting an LEA's proficiency requirements, (Carnegie Units, performance on state assessment, end of course exam, portfolio, senior project, CIM, etc.) it is anticipated that more students will meet expectations and graduate with a high school diploma. Implementation of the Rhode Island Diploma system has also defined a clear set of expectations for all students in the state. The process has encouraged LEAs to carefully examine the value of their current diploma and examine the needs of student's not meeting proficiency expectations. The request for technical assistance from the districts for universal design, collaborative teaching, literacy interventions and other practices that would benefit special education students has increased with the implementation of the RI Diploma System.

The specific impact on graduation rates for students in special education is difficult to predict, however many high schools have begun rigorous examination of data through the Commissioners Review process which has informed them of the progress of special education students and access to the general education curriculum. It is anticipated that the work of the high schools in meeting the RI Diploma System requirements and the RI High School Regulations will improve access for students in special education to the general education curriculum. Informal observation from the RIDE School Support Visit (monitoring system) has indicated an increased awareness of the gaps in performance of students in special education and districts intentionally aligning resources to address performance gaps.

Reliability of the Graduation/Dropout Data

The Rhode Island Department of Education moved to the cohort measurement formula described in the measurement section in 2007. With the implementation of this system which verifies each students reported status through the students' universal identifier, RIDE obtained a more accurate picture of the graduation and dropout rates for youth in special education. RIDE first reported graduation and dropout rates based on the cohort formula in the April 2008 APR Revision. The baseline graduation rate of 55.9% for students in special education was established and the rigorous and measurable targets (below) were established.

**Monitoring Priority: FAPE in the LRE**

**Indicator 1. –:** Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma compared to percent of all youth in the State graduating with a regular diploma.(20 U.S.C. 1416 (a)(3)(A))

**Measurement:** Beginning in 2007 Rhode Island integrated the data collection for graduation and dropout rates for special education students with the state's student information system. Rhode Island's student information system includes a unique state assigned student identifier (SASID) for every student in the state. The integration of the special education graduation and dropout data collection system into the Rhode Island student information system has allowed the state to generate a valid and reliable picture of the graduation and dropout situation. The cohort formula (four year graduation rate) utilized for graduation rate is:

$$\text{Annual Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of students in cohort who graduated in 4 years or less}}{[\text{number of first time entering 9}^{\text{th}} \text{ graders}] - \text{transfers out} + \text{transfers in}} \times 100$$

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| FFY                        | Measurable and Rigorous Target                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>2007</b><br>(2007-2008) | <b>56.9% of the students in Special Education will graduate with a regular high school diploma issued by their local education agency.</b> |
| <b>2008</b><br>(2008-2009) | <b>57.9% of the students in Special Education will graduate with a regular high school diploma issued by their local education agency.</b> |
| <b>2009</b><br>(2009-2010) | <b>58.9% of the students in Special Education will graduate with a regular high school diploma issued by their local education agency.</b> |
| <b>2010</b><br>(2010-2011) | <b>59.9% of the students in Special Education will graduate with a regular high school diploma issued by their local education agency.</b> |

**Actual Target Data for 2007:**

**Rhode Island Graduation Rate Data 2006 & 2007 APR**

| Exit Type                            | Special Education                 |                                   |                       | All Students                       |                                    |                       |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Year/Cohort Count                    | 2006 APR<br>Cohort Count<br>3,450 | 2007 APR<br>Cohort Count<br>2,960 | Increase/<br>Decrease | 2006 APR<br>Cohort Count<br>14,915 | 2007 APR<br>Cohort Count<br>13,198 | Increase/<br>Decrease |
| Percent Graduated                    | 55.9%<br>(1,929)                  | 55.9%<br>(1,656)                  | 0                     | 70.1%<br>(10,459)                  | 73.9%<br>(9,757)                   | +3.8%                 |
| Percent Dropped Out                  | 27.7%<br>(955)                    | 25.4%<br>(753)                    | -2.3%                 | 19.2%<br>(2,868)                   | 15.5%<br>(2,049)                   | -3.7%                 |
| Percent Completed GED                | 4.6%<br>(159)                     | 4.0%<br>(118)                     | -0.6%                 | 4.6%<br>(689)                      | 3.2%<br>(426)                      | -1.4%                 |
| Percent Retained/<br>Still in School | 11.8%<br>(407)                    | 14.6%<br>(433)                    | +2.8%                 | 6.0%<br>(899)                      | 7.3%<br>(966)                      | +1.3%                 |

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**Discussion of Improvement Activities Completed and Explanation of Progress or Slippage that occurred for 2007:**

Baseline for the percent of students in Special education graduating with a regular high school diploma as established in the 2006 APR at 55.9% with an improvement target of 56.9%. Rhode Island achieved a 55.9% graduation rate. The state did not meet the measurable and rigorous target.

From the actual data, the figure of interest was the increase of 2.8% in the number of students who remained in school after four years. The Rhode Island High School regulations speak to the need for schools to create alternative pathways for students to achieve proficiency in the RI High School Diploma System even if the student's pathway will require the student to remain enrolled beyond four years of high school. In special education, this has resulted in a variety of transition programs at the regional and local levels focused on students who require more than four years of high school to achieve proficiency and graduate to self-sufficiency. The increase of 2.8% of students in special education remaining enrolled beyond four years could be a result of the alternative pathway programming. Of equal significance is the decline in the dropout rate which will be discussed in Indicator #2.

Completed improvement activities are described on the table below.

**Revisions, with Justification, to Proposed Targets / Improvement Activities / Timelines / Resources for 2007:**

Although Rhode Island did not meet the measurable and rigorous target for FFY 2007, the state has chosen not to revise targets at this time pending the further implementation of the Rhode Island Diploma System.

| 2007 Improvement Activities                                                                                                                                                              | Timelines                                                                                                                                                                                | Resources                                                                                                                                                         | Status                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Development and implementation of a valid and reliable data system for collecting and reporting graduation rates for special education students that is the same system as all students. | By December 2007                                                                                                                                                                         | Personnel from the RIDE Office for Diverse Learners and Office of Network and Information Services                                                                | Complete                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Implementation of Rhode Island High School Regulations - Commissioners Review & Approval.                                                                                                | Official designations were released in January 2008.<br><br>Next review begins Spring, 2009 with full approval available beginning in 2010. All schools must meet full approval by 2012. | RIDE, Office of High School & Middle School Redesign.<br><br>Participation of RIDE, Office for Diverse Learners personnel representing special education and ELL. | Ongoing<br><br>Designations released January, 2008. No schools received full approval, most received "preliminary approval", some received "approval withheld" indicating the need for |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                          | significant action.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Reassignment of RI Department of Education, Office for Diverse Learners personnel to align with districts in need of intervention. Assign appropriate personnel to Progressive Support and Intervention Teams (P,S & I) targeting LEAs with high schools “in need of intervention”. | September 2006                                                                                                                        | RIDE, Office for Diverse Learners personnel have been assigned to the LEAs with high schools that are in need of intervention.                           | Complete                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Monitor impact on the graduation rate for students in special education based on implementation of the Rhode Island Diploma System and utilization of the new cohort formula. Develop district level reporting and performance indications.                                         | 2008-2010                                                                                                                             | RDE, Office for Diverse Learners personnel<br><br>Provide analysis on the impact and develop corrective actions in processes as necessary.               | District level reporting available as of 2007. LEAs including plans to improve graduation rates in the LEAs application to RIDE for state and federal aid beginning with 2008FY grant submission. |
| Support to school personnel on implementation of Response to Intervention and progress monitoring at the secondary level and promote implementation of co-teaching models being adopted by all districts.                                                                           | 2008, ongoing<br><br>RIDE Leadership Forum for the spring of 2008 will be devoted to the topic of co-teaching at the secondary level. | RI Department of Education, Office for Diverse Learners personnel<br><br>Alignment of contracts for professional development toward RTI and co-teaching. | Ongoing<br><br>Statewide training completed spring 2008 and follow up forum held fall 2008. Targeted intervention with volunteer districts began September 2008.                                  |
| <b>2008 Improvement Activities</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Timelines</b>                                                                                                                      | <b>Resources</b>                                                                                                                                         | <b>Status</b>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Examine the targeted graduation improvement activities in LEAs federal and state grant submissions with improvements in graduation rate data. Target districts with rates below the state average.                                                                                  | Spring 2009 (utilizing 2007 data). LEA grants are due in May of each year.                                                            | RIDE, Office for Diverse Learners personnel                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

